

# THE BROAD HIGHWAY

A Tale of 19th Century England, Full of the Thrills of Adventure and Spirit of Romance

By JEFFERY FARNOL

Copyright, 1915, Little, Brown & Co.  
 Peter Vibart, an English scholar, dependent upon his uncle, Sir George Vibart, bequeathed only 10 guineas (£10) to the old man. Making a fortune of £100,000, he also provided £100,000 for the one who marries the Lady Sophia, within a year of his death. The old man, a friend with whom he lived, Sir Richard Amstrater, decided to go down the Broad Highway to the village where he should be a blacksmith in the employ of "Black" George. Peter goes to the "maunted" house in a hovel. The postilion, three times mistaken for his cousin Maurice, the only difference between the two is that Peter is clean shaven and Maurice has a beard.  
 Peter, at the beginning of Book II, is suddenly awakened by a man's voice calling "Charman!" Rushing from his bed, he finds a strange woman about to shoot at a man entering his home. It is his cousin Maurice, whom he beats into insensibility after a fierce struggle. A postilion helps Peter remove the prostrate Charman leaves during the night, and when Peter awakes he finds only a note from her and a letter. "Black" George, whose jealousy Peter has been growing steadily, suddenly leaves the shop. Prudence, who loves George, comes to Peter for advice, and the two decide to induce him to return. George, however, is content that Prudence and Peter are lovers. When Peter returns from his vain search for "Black" George, he finds that Charman has come back to his home.  
 A few nights later Peter meets a bearded man who tells him that "Black" George has vowed to fight "the score" who has given his sweetheart's love until one of the other is dead.  
 One morning while Peter is at work, the postilion who helped him remove Maurice's body looks in. The postilion tries, vainly, to bring Peter into telling him where Charman is.  
 BOOK II.  
 CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued).

"I DO."  
 "Well, let's say three pound."  
 I shook my head, and drawing the iron from the fire, began to hammer at it.  
 "Well then," shouted the Postillon, for I was making as much din as possible, "say four—five—ten—fifteen—twenty—twenty-five—thirty!" Here I ceased hammering.  
 "Tell me when you've done!" said I.  
 "You're a cool customer, you are—ah! an' a rum un' at that—I never see a rummer!"  
 "Other people have thought the same," said I, examining the half-finished horse-shoe ere I set it back on the fire.  
 "Sixty guinea!" said the Postillon gloomily.  
 "Come again!" said I, his gloom deepening.  
 "Once more!" said I.  
 "A 'undred—one 'undred guinea!" said



Some one was calling me a long way off.

he, removing his hat to mop at his brow.  
 "Any more?" I inquired.  
 "No!" returned the Postillon sulkily, putting on his hat, "I'm done!"  
 "Did he set the figure at a hundred guinea?" said I.  
 "Im—oh! 'e 's mad for 'er, 'e is—'e'd 'ave 'er, body and soul, for 'er, 'e would, but ain't got to offer no more; no woman as ever breathe'd—no matter 'ow 'andsome an' up-standin'—is worth sixty 'undred guinea—'e ain't as if she was a blood-mare—an' I'm done!"  
 "Then I wish you good-day!"  
 "But—just think—a 'undred guinea is a fortune!"  
 "It is!" said I.  
 "Come, think it over," said the Postillon persuasively, "think it over, now!"  
 "Let me fully understand you then," said I, "you propose to pay me 100 guinea on behalf of your master, known heretofore as Number One, for such information as shall enable him to discover the whereabouts of a certain person known as Her, Number Two—is that how the matter stands?"  
 "Ah! that's 'ow it stands," nodded the Postillon, "the money to be yours as soon as ever 'e lays 'ands on 'er—is it a go, or no?"  
 "No!"  
 "No!"  
 "No!"  
 "Why, you must be stark, starin' mad—that you must—unless you're sweet on 'er yourself!"  
 "You talk like a fool!" said I angrily.  
 "So you are sweet on 'er then?"  
 "Asah!" said I. "And, dropping my hammer, I made toward him, but he darted nimbly to the door, where, seeing I did not pursue, he paused.  
 "I may be a hazz," he nodded, "an' I may be fool—but don't go a-fallin' in love w' ladies as is above you an' out o' your reach, and don't chuck away a 'undred guinea for one as ain't likely to look my way—not me! Which I begs leave to say—hazz yourself, an' likewise bid-bah!" With which expetive he set his thumb to his nose, spread out his fingers, wagged them and swaggered off.  
 "Ah, me, and out of my reach! One so likely to look my way!"  
 And, in due season, having finished the horse-shoe, having set each tool in its appointed place in the racks, and raked out the cinders from the fire, I took my hat and coat, and closing the door behind me, set out for the Hollow.

CHAPTER XVIII.  
 IT WAS evening—that time before the moon is up and when the earth is dark, as yet, and full of shadows. Now as I went, by some chance there recurred to me the words of an old song I had read somewhere, years ago, words written in the glorious, brutal, knightly days of Edward the First, of warlike memory.  
 And yet, despite this, the words of the old song recurred again, and again, and I felt myself, voicing themselves in my footsteps so that, to banish them, I must stand still.  
 And in that very moment a gigantic hare came strutting through the hedge, hearing the din in a single bound—and "Black" George confronted me.  
 "Hazard of face, white hair and beard, and unkempt, his clothes all dusty and torn, he presented a very wild and terrible appearance; and beneath one arm he carried two blood-guinea. The Pedler spoke truly then, and as I met the old man's smoldering eye, I felt my mouth suddenly parched and dry, and the patches of my hands grew moist and clammy.  
 "A moment neither of us spoke, only we looked at each other steadily in the dusk, and I saw the hair of his beard bristle, and he raised one great hand to

the collar of his shirt, and tore it open as if it were strangling him.  
 "George!" said I, at last, and held out my hand.  
 "George never stirred.  
 "Won't you shake hands, George?" His lips opened, but no words came.  
 "Had I known where to look for you, I should have sought you out days ago," I went on; "as it is, I have been wishing to meet you, hoping to set matters right."  
 Once again his lips opened, but still no word came.  
 "You see, Prudence is breaking her heart over you."  
 A laugh burst from him, sudden and harsh.  
 "You're a liar!" said he, and his voice quavered strangely.  
 "I speak gospel truth!" said I.  
 "I be nowt to Prue since the day you beat me at th' 'ammer-throwin'—an' ye know it."  
 "Prudence loves you, and always has," said I. "Go back to her, George, go back to her—she loves you. If you still doubt my word—here, read that!" and I held out his own letter, the letter on which Prudence had written those four words: "George, I love you."  
 He took it from me—crumpled it slowly in his hand and tossed it into the ditch.  
 "You're a liar!" said he again, "an' a coward!"  
 "And you," said I, "you are a fool, a blind, gross, selfish fool, who, in degrading yourself—in skulking about the woods and lanes—bringing black shame and sorrow to as sweet a maid as ever—"  
 "It don't need you to tell me what she be an' what she beant," said Black George in a low, reproachful voice. "I knowed 'er long afore you ever set eyes on 'er—grew up w' 'er, I did, an' I beant deaf nor blind. Ye see, I loved 'er—all my life—that's why one o' us two 's a-goin' to lie out 'ere all night—ah! an' all tomorrow, likewise, if summun don't chance to find us," saying which, he forced a cudgel into my hand.  
 "What do you mean, George?"  
 "I means as if you don't do for me, then I be a-goin' to do for 'ee."  
 "But why?" I cried; "in God's name—why?"  
 "I be slow, p'raps, an' thick p'raps, but I beant a fule—come, man—if she be worth winnin' she be worth fightin' for."  
 "But I tell you she loves Black George, and no other—she never had any thought of me, or I of her—this is madness—and worse!" and I tossed the cudgel aside.  
 "An' I tell 'ee," broke in the smith, his repression giving way before a fury

held out to me, wiping the blood from my eyes as I did so.  
 And now, as I faced him once more, all things vanished from my ken save the man before me—he filled the universe; and, even as he leaped upon me, I leaped upon him and struck with all my strength; there was a jarring, splintering shock, and Black George was beaten down upon his knees, but as, dropping my weapon, I stepped forward, he rose and stood panting and staring at the broken cudgel in his hand.  
 "George!" said I.  
 "You 'm a-bleedin', Peter!"  
 "That matter, so are you."  
 "Blood-lettin' be good for a man—sometimes—it eases un."  
 "It does," I panted; "perhaps you are—willing to hear reason—now?"  
 "We be—even so far—but fists be better nor—sticks any day—an' I—be goin'—to try ye—w' fists!"  
 "Have we not bled each other sufficiently?"  
 "No," cried George, between set teeth. "I be more nor blood-lettin'—I want an' me—I said as 'ow one on us would lie out 'ere all night—an' so 'e shall—by God!—come on—fists be best arter."  
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 This was the heyday of boxing, and while at Oxford I had earned some small fame at the sport. But it was one thing to spar with a man my own weight in a padded ring, with limited rounds governed by a code of rules, and quite another to fight a man like Black George in a lonely meadow, by light of moon. Moreover, he was well acquainted with the science, as I could see by the way he "shaped," the only difference between us being that, whereas he fought with fast, planted square and wide apart, I balanced myself upon my tiptoes, it had served me to recover my breath, and though my head yet rung from the under-stroke, and the blood still flowed freely, getting every now and then into my eyes, my brain was clear as we fronted each other.  
 The smith stood with his mighty shoulders stooped somewhat forward, his left arm drawn back, his right flung across his chest, and so long as we fought I watched that great flat and knotted forearm, for though he struck oftener with his left, it was in that passive right that I thought my danger really lay.  
 It is not my intention to chronicle this fight blow by blow; enough, and more than enough, has already been said in that regard; suffice it then, that as the fight progressed I found that I was far the quicker, as I had hoped, and that the majority of his blows, either blocked or avoided easily enough.  
 Time after time his fist shot over my shoulder, or over my head, and time after time I countered heavily—now on his body, now on his face; once he was dazed, and once I caught a momentary glimpse of his features convulsed with pain; he was smeared with blood from the waist up, but still he came on.  
 I fought desperately now, savagely, taking advantage of every opening, for though I struck him four times to his once, yet his blows had four times the weight of mine; my forearms were bruised to either elbow, and my breath came in gasps; and always I watched that deadly "right," and presently it came, with arm and shoulder and body behind it—quick as a flash, and relentless as a cannonball, but I was ready, and, as I leaped I struck, and struck him clean and true upon the angle of the jaw, and, spinning round, Black George fell and lay with his arms wide stretched and face buried in the grass.  
 Slowly, slowly he got upon his knees and thence to his feet, and so stood panting, his face ghastly, and sweat, bruised and cut and disfigured, staring at me, as one in amazement.  
 Now, as I looked, my heart went out to him, and I reached forth my right hand.  
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 But Black George only looked at me, and shook his head and groaned.  
 "Oh, Peter!" said he, "you be a man, Peter! I've fou't—ah! many's the time, an' no man ever knocked me down afore. Oh, Peter! I—I could love 'ee for it—if I didn't hate the very sight of 'ee—come on, an' let's get it over an' done w'!"  
 So once again fists were clenched and jaws set—once again came the tramping of feet, the hiss of breath and the thudding shock of blows given and taken.  
 A sudden, jarring impact—the taste of sulphur on my tongue—a gathering darkness before my eyes, and, knowing this was the end, I strove desperately to close with him; but I was dazed, blind—my arms fell paralyzed, and, in that moment the Smith's right fist drove forward. A jagged flame shot up to heaven—the earth seemed to rush up toward me—a roaring blackness engulfed me and then—silence.

CHAPTER XIX.  
 SOME one was calling to me, a long way off.  
 Some one was leaning down from a great height to call to me in the depths; and the voice was wonderfully sweet, but faint, faint, because the height was so very high, and the depths so very great. And still the voice called and called, and I felt sorry that I could not answer, because, as I say, the voice was troubled, and wonderfully sweet.  
 And, little by little, it seemed that it grew nearer, this voice, as it descended to me in these depths of blackness, or was I being lifted up to the heights where, I know, blackness could not be? Ah, indeed, I was being lifted, for I could feel a hand upon my shoulder, and a cool hand that touched my cheek, and brushed the hair from my forehead; a strong, gentle hand it was, with soft fingers, and it was lifting me up and up from the loathly depths which seemed more black and more horrible the farther I drew from them.  
 And so I heard the voice nearer, and ever nearer, until I could distinguish words, and the voice had tears in it, and the words were very tender.  
 "Peter—speak!—speak to me, Peter!"  
 "Charman!" said I, within myself; "why, truly, whose hand but hers could have lifted me out of that gulf of death, back to light and life?" Yet I did not speak aloud, for I had no mind to, yet a while.  
 "Ah! speak to me—speak to me, Peter! How can you lie there so still and pale?" And now her arms were about me, strong and protecting, and my head was drawn down upon her bosom.  
 "Oh, Peter—my Peter!"  
 Nay, but was this Charman, the cold, proud Charman? Truly I had never heard that thrill in her voice before—could this indeed be Charman? And lying thus, with my head on this sweet pillow, I could hear her heart whispering to me, and it seemed that it was striving to tell me something—striving, striving to tell me something, could I but understand—ah! could I but understand!  
 "I waited for you so long—so long, Peter—and the supper is all spoiled—a rabbit, Peter—you liked rabbit, and—oh, God! I want you—don't you hear me, Peter—I want you—want you!" and how her cheek was pressed to mine, and her lips were upon my hair, and upon my brow—her lips! Was this indeed Charman, and was I Peter Vibart? Ah, if I could but know what it was her heart was trying to tell me, so quickly and passionately.  
 And while I lay listening, listening, something hot splashed down upon my cheek, and then another, and another; her bosom heaved tumultuously, and instinctively, raising my arms, I clasped them about her.

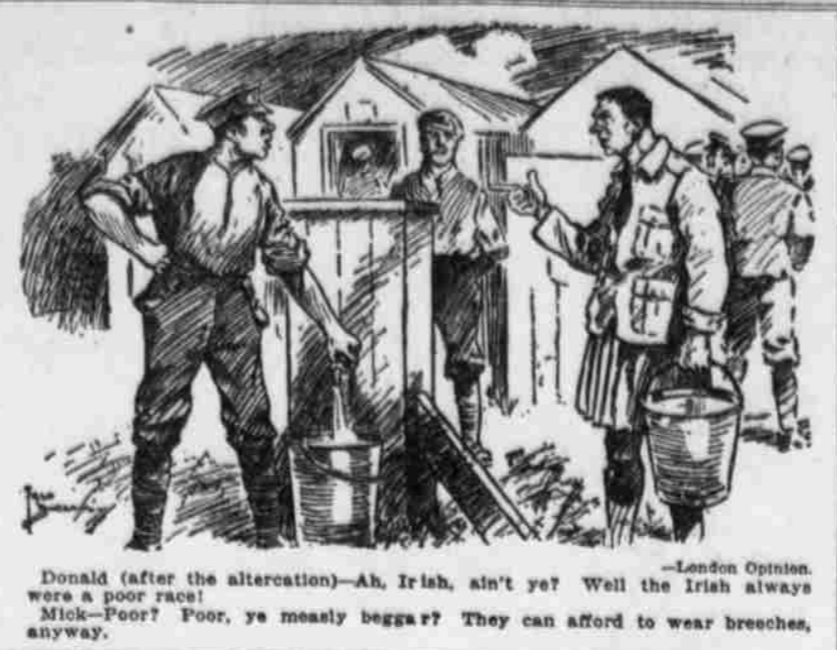
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(CONTINUED ON MONDAY.)

# SCRAPPLE



Donald (after the altercation)—Ah, Irish, ain't ye? Well the Irish always were a poor race! Mick—Poor? Poor, ye measly beggar? They can afford to wear breeches, anyway.



A Good Reason



A Perfectly Neutral Editor

Miss Oligri—So you are five and a half, are you, Ethel? How old do you think I am?  
 Ethel—Sixteen!  
 Miss Oligri—Oh, you quite flatter me!  
 Ethel—I can't count any farther than that!

Law and Love  
 "I understand he won her by quotations from Mrs. Browning's sonnets."  
 "She got her divorce by quotations from the statutes."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

The Game of Golf  
 Farmer Barnes—There's one good thing about golf anyhow. Farmer Fallows (skeptically)—What's that?  
 Farmer Barnes—Why, ye don't have to play it if ye don't want to.—London Scraps.



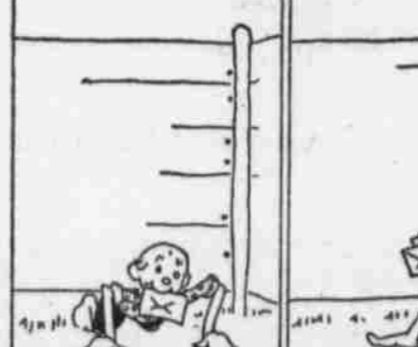
Cause for Gratitude

Minister—Amid all your troubles, I am pleased to see that your sense of gratitude does not fail.  
 Mrs. Jones—No, sir. Rheumatism is bad enough, but I must be thankful I still have a back to have it in.

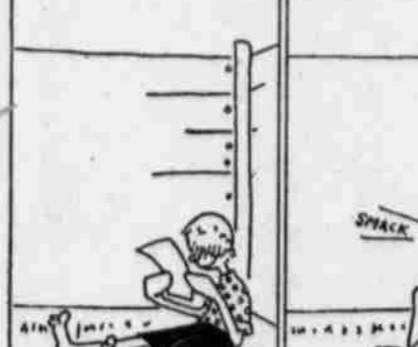
## SONGS WITHOUT WORDS



Willie Gets a Letter From Susie Jones



—AND THE WORST IS YET TO COME



A Fearful Loss



THE MODERN PARENT



House Master—Have you been smoking, Jonathan?  
 Jonathan—No, sir.  
 House Master—But somebody's been smoking. Who is it?  
 Jonathan—Oh, yes, sir. I have.  
 House Master—But somebody's been smoking. Who is it?  
 Jonathan—Oh, yes, sir. I have.



THE PADDED CELL



A Reversal of Form



Hard Luck



Editor—Say, young man, your jokes and Napoleon are alike.  
 Joaker—H'm, how so?  
 Editor—Why, they're both dead.



Scandalous



First Young Lady—Look at 'er. Ack-shally taken on wiv a civilian. Disgraceful, I call it.



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